

Valpo Parks Unveils \$10 Million “rePLAY” Initiative

Revitalizing City Parks

Valpo Parks has announced a significant investment in the city’s park system with the launch of the “rePLAY” initiative. This \$10 million initiative will enhance and upgrade 10 existing parks in 2025.

“Over the past decade, it’s been rewarding to add offerings like the Flounder & Friends Skatepark, Creekside Trails, ValPAWraiso Dog Park, and more. But we’ve never lost sight of the timeless parks we grew up loving,” said Mayor Jon Costas. “The rePLAY initiative ensures our existing parks remain cherished gathering places for generations to come.” The rePLAY initiative will prioritize enhancing patron accessibility, addressing infrastructure needs, implementing safety measures and investing in sustainability practices. Improvements will encompass a wide range of enhancements, including



upgraded playgrounds, restrooms, shelters, sports fields and pickleball courts, ensuring a more enjoyable and inclusive park experience for all. Parks included in the rePLAY initiative are Kirchhoff Park, Fairgrounds Park, Tower Park, ValPlayso, Foundation Meadows Park, Rogers Lakewood

Park, Ogden Botanical Gardens, Glenrose South Park, Will Park and Banta Park. “The rePLAY initiative is a direct result of ongoing public input and our comprehensive Parks Master Plan,” said Kevin Nuppnau, Valpo Parks Director. “This initiative will not only improve our existing parks but also ensure they continue to serve as vital community gathering places.” The rePLAY initiative will be funded using bond proceeds originally earmarked for the proposed sports park, instead putting them to immediate use for long-term benefits. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2025, with projects completed by the end of the year. To learn more about the rePLAY initiative and stay updated on project timelines and community engagement opportunities, visit bit.ly/ValpoParksrePLAY.

YOU'RE
invited
Community Conference | April 17, 2025

See p. 4 for details

Dear Neighbors,

We're off to a bright start to 2025 and I'm energized by the longer days and the plans ahead. We all love our parks and Valpo Parks has announced a significant investment in the city's park system with the launch of the "rePLAY" initiative. This \$10 million initiative will enhance and upgrade 10 existing parks in 2025. Read more in this issue of City Talk.

It's also a treat to share that Valpo Parks has taken on the day-to-day management and operations of the beloved community landmark, the Memorial Opera House. This jewel will be a fantastic complement to Parks programming and the cornerstone of a new creative arts district.

We're excited to introduce a new event as we invite the community to attend the Valparaíso Community Conference on Thursday, April 17, 2025. Because research shows that the more you get involved in your community, the more likely you are to stay, the conference is designed to help every participant – newcomer or lifelong resident – engage in Valparaíso. Read more in this issue and sign up using the link.

It's a pleasure to be a part of a community that is so engaged and so forward-thinking. Wishing a happy 2025 to all!

Sincerely,

Jon Costas

Jon Costas, Mayor



Good Neighbor and Rising Stars Recognized

Valparaíso is full of outstanding people of all ages and the City of Valparaíso has created the Good Neighbor and Rising Star recognitions as a way to highlight these extraordinary citizens.

The Mayor's Youth Council named **Ryan and Evan Quackenbush** as Valparaíso's **Rising Stars**. The inaugural Rising Star recognition celebrates the abundance of responsible, intelligent and hardworking youth that contribute to the success of Valparaíso every day. The City of Valparaíso named **Paul Sommer** as its most recent **Good Neighbor**, recognizing exemplary commitment to the community. To learn more about each recognition and how to nominate someone, visit the Community Engagement page at Valpo.us.



Council Corner

Featuring a member of the Valparaíso City Council



Barbara Domer | City Council, District 3
Serving since 2024

Barbara Domer has been a resident of Valparaíso for 34 years and has two adult sons who are both Valparaíso High School graduates. Domer was elected to the Valparaíso City Council in 2023. Her top priorities are infrastructure maintenance and improvements, city government transparency and civic engagement.

You can reach Barbara Domer at BDomer@valpo.us.



This neighborhood group celebrated the opening of a Rain Garden in the Jessee-Pifer Neighborhood, funded with support of a Neighborhood Improvement Grant. The grant program has funded 120 projects since it was introduced in 2018, resulting in more than \$1.3 million in neighborhood improvements. These grants help neighbors come together for common goals, like community spaces, projects that add neighborhood pride, physical improvements and more. **Applications for the upcoming grant cycle are due on March 1, 2025.** To learn more about the program, visit tinyurl.com/ValpoGrant2025. For questions or guidance, contact Community Engagement Director Maggie Clifton at MClifton@valpo.us or at City Hall, (219) 462-1161.

Valpo Parks to Manage *Memorial Opera House*

The City of Valparaiso, Valpo Parks and the Porter County Commissioners have announced a new management agreement for the Memorial Opera House, effective January 1, 2025. Under this agreement, Valpo Parks will take on the day-to-day management and operations of this beloved community landmark. “Adding our expertise and resources in events to this newly renovated jewel promises to be a magical combination. We look forward to growing a creative arts district in our downtown, centered around the beloved and historic opera house,” said Mayor Jon Costas.



The Memorial Opera House will continue to host a diverse range of programming, including live theater productions, concerts and community events. The existing Opera House staff will remain in place, providing valuable experience and continuity for patrons and partners. Valpo Parks is committed to working with existing user groups and stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition and to foster a collaborative environment for the arts in Valparaiso. For the schedule and tickets to Memorial Opera House, visit MemorialOperaHouse.com.



New Wayfinding Signs along US 30 signaling that Valparaiso is more than a place to pass through, but a DESTINATION! The signage is part of an INDOT partnership initiated in 2012 where the City of Valparaiso took over management and maintenance of Lincolnway in exchange for over \$20 million in improvements to US 30 within Valpo city limits. In addition to the new signage, improvements have included lighting, landscaping, walkways, resurfacing and enhancements to make Valparaiso more inviting.

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You're Invited **Community Conference on April 17**

The City of Valparaiso is inviting the community to attend the **Valparaiso Community Conference** on Thursday, April 17, 2025, noon to 5:00 pm at the Harre Union, Valparaiso University. "Research shows the more you get involved in the community where you live, the more likely you are to stay," said Maggie Clifton, Director of Community Engagement for the City of Valparaiso. "Whether you're new in town or you've lived here for a while, it is our goal that every participant finds one or more meaningful ways to engage in our community, offering pathways to build connections and contribute to the community's growth," she said.

The Community Conference will include insightful speakers, active networking and ways to plug into the Valparaiso community. Mayor Jon Costas will serve as keynote speaker, sharing thoughts on "Using Civility to Promote Productivity" with insights on how to find common ground and move forward productively in an era of heightened polarization. Other sessions will include information about philanthropy, city government, neighbors helping neighbors and advocacy in action.

Learn More and Register

The Valparaiso Community Conference is open to all ages and backgrounds. Admission is \$15, which includes lunch. Learn more and register by scanning the QR code or visiting tinyurl.com/CommConValpo.



REGISTER NOW



April 17 | 12 - 5 PM | Harre Union

State of the City

Mayor Costas delivered the State of the City address at the annual luncheon hosted by the Valpo Chamber. To read his address and learn more about 2024 accomplishments and 2025 goals, visit the Mayor's page (under "City Government") at Valpo.us.

Neighborhood Note

Please remember to remove your trash and recycling containers from the street on the day of collection. Your street will look better, plows can get through easier and your neighbors will thank you for complying with this city ordinance.